

# Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

## Meeting Notes for August 1, 2001

### Agenda Items

- Maintenance Base Facility/Street Vacation Public Benefit Discussion

### Commissioners Present

Rick Sundberg, Chair  
Mimi Sheridan  
Carolyn Law  
Paul Tomita  
Jack Mackie

### Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit  
Ron Lewis, Sound Transit  
Mike Williams, Sound Transit  
Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign  
Kathy A Dockins, CityDesign  
Marty Curry, Planning Commission

### LRRP Business

There was some confusion about the meeting location, and Rick suggested we start with LRRP business despite the small number of people present.

The letter to the Editor was re-vamped as a "Dear Reader or Dear Colleague" letter, and Panel members discussed additional edits before directing Cheryl to send it to the P-I again, as well as the Times, the Weekly, and the Stranger. In addition to our own distribution list, the letter should also go to Sound Transit, the City Council, and the Mayor.

The MLK letter to the ST Board should also go to the Citizens Project Review Committee, and needs to be edited quite a bit. Rick feels it should be more concise, or the Board won't get it. He prefers that the letter focus on how the MLK segment fits into the community as opposed to specific design guidelines, which they may not have read. Paul suggests omitting most modifiers (words and phrases) as a way to cut copy, and Jack thinks construction should be tied into design to clarify the issue to the Board.

After everyone arrived from the 19<sup>th</sup> floor, introductions were made all around.

### Maintenance Base/Street Vacations

*Mike Merrick, Sound Transit*

*Bill Rosen, Alaskan Copper*

Mike Merrick provided a general overview of the facility, starting with a recap of the original seven site options; how the site was selected; and what impacts might result. The site is between Airport Way and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South (from East to West) and encompasses Hanford, Horton, and Hinds (from North to South). The total area is approximately 25 acres.

The environmental assessment addresses displacement, employment, noise, vibration, air quality, water, and archaeological concerns. The north half of the site is the old Rainier Brewery property. Mike presented an overlay showing the requested vacation of Hanford, Horton and Hinds, which also shows that the impact to those streets was minimal. They don't go any further east currently anyway, and they serve only the property immediately surrounding them. 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue is also already discontinuous, and its vacation will not affect any other property. The businesses in and

around the site are mostly related to trucking and truck repair, so the Maintenance Base Facility fits right in.

Construction on the site will close some utilities that serve the site, but ST will create easements for those that go through. Power lines will be relocated. Currently, there's little or no vegetation. The pre- and post-development renderings showed how the new site will open the area up and make it more attractive to the traveling public on Airport Way. Other benefits to the public include landscaping on the central access road as well as around the perimeter.

The site will cater to visitors from other transportation agencies as well as members of the community, including high school students, who can learn about engineering, vehicle maintenance and repair, electronic repair, the paint shop, etc. The first floor will house the maintenance bays, while the second floor will have a visitor reception area that looks out over the maintenance bays. A ramp from the parking lot will lead directly to this balcony.

Building design uses modern materials, but brick cladding in order to match the style in that area. The shop portion will have metal cladding, as well as glazed roof monitors to let in light during the day and to act as a beacon at night.

At this point, Debora mentioned that the building is one bay smaller than the original plan and has moved slightly to the west, so the allee of trees is actually wider. While landscaping around the perimeter is required, the site landscaping is voluntary. Jack appreciates the cost savings of a smaller building and that they used the extra area for landscaping.

#### Discussion

Rick asked Beverly Barnett if she was expecting a recommendation today; she responded that they didn't necessarily expect a decision, but is glad that LRRP is taking up the issue. She felt that the current vacation policies give little guidance for industrial areas, and especially what public benefit to look for (other than balancing benefit with land use impacts). Refinements are being made based on LRRP recommendations.

- Are aerial vacations being requested as well? *(Vacations include subterranean & aerial. Airport Way does not require a vacation, as its function will still be transportation.)*
- Will there be pedestrian access to the landscaped areas? *(There will be a security fence around the site with the main entrance being on Airport Way.)*
- We think streets will last forever, but once they're gone, they're gone forever. We used to have an interurban system, and now it's gone.
- Well, yes and no—we still own the land.
- As long as the buildings are here, that's one thing, but if the buildings "go away" we've lost the streets forever. *(But these streets in question have no purpose right now. The East is a dead end, and the West ends at the railroad yards.)*

Bill Rosen, joint petitioner and owner of Alaskan Copper, says that he originally thought the site was a disaster. He has 200 people in one building (the largest group of employees in one building in that area) who are entirely dependent on a handful of employees working in buildings that will be demolished. He is co-petitioning for the street vacations, as they will allow him to consolidate his employees into one area instead of just losing the demolished buildings. He likens that alternative to cutting off the feet of an animal – sure, they're not big, vital organs, but it's nearly impossible to get by without them.

- Land consolidation is a good thing in an industrial area. The ST building doesn't seem out of scale, and the Alaskan Copper vacation seems consistent with previous vacations.
- The public benefit discussion is always difficult. I want to be sensitive to the employees of that area, and wants to ensure the public benefit, but also think it's important that industrial areas remain un-gentrified.
- What about the N/S line, which is a storm drain; Hanford is combined sewer in pipe—will they be building over the sewer line? *(Alaskan Copper won't build over it because it costs too much. ST, but ST is building a bridge over it.)*
- The public benefit is hard to gauge; it would be a loss to lose Alaskan Copper. I know the area and the streets don't go anywhere E/W; only N/S.
- I see two levels of benefit: up close to the people on-site, and for passersby on I-5 and Airport Way. The building is attractive and it has artwork you can see from your passing car. Like the City Water Department (SPU) building with the fountain in front, this can be a good symbol of Sound Transit.
- Are other utilities being relocated? *(A lot of small local distribution lines between 8<sup>th</sup> Ave & Airport Way; a portion of a 30" water main will be relocated because of groundwork for the aerial structure, but that's about it.)*
- This vacation seems so much like transitions that have already occurred; this is just more of the same. It definitely feels different from vacations in the downtown core. The aggregate of aesthetic, access, and economic factors is compelling. The visitors' center has a true regional public benefit impact, especially having youth visit (high school age, etc).
- There's a massing of buildings; it's not going to be a Boeing hangar.
- It is nice to see a partnership between ST and Alaskan Copper.
- The only remaining building from the original street routing is now a brewpub.

The Panel noted there are lingering concerns about the alignment of Airport Way with the site entry drive, and hopes to see this connection strengthened in the final design. Rick added that this vacation petition is much different from the more typical downtown core petitions where maintaining the urban grid is much more of a concern. With that, Rick suggested that the Panel form an action supporting the street vacation petition.

### Recommendation

*The LRRP thanks Sound Transit and Alaskan Copper for a good presentation and recommends approval of their petition to vacate Horton, Hinds, and Hanford for the Sound Transit Maintenance Base Facility and resulting consolidation of Alaskan Copper buildings. The Panel believes there will be public benefit provided that is commensurate with the street vacations, in the form of:*

- *The educational component of site visits from the public;*
- *The central allee of trees and other on-site landscaping;*
- *An artist-designed lighting feature for the light monitors/clerestories that can serve as a marker for Sound Transit; and*
- *Economic benefit in keeping these properties in industrial use.*

*This is a good, solid piece of urban design.*

### **LRRP Business continued**

The Panel reviewed the MLK letter with Ron Lewis of Sound Transit. Ron feels that the timing of the letter is good because of the project direction and number of unresolved issues. It can act as

a cover to a whole packet of info the Board will be getting. It conveys urban design character issues to the Board. The Panel decided it was too lengthy and directed Cheryl to make edits.

There will be an MLK briefing at the 8/23 board meeting, so sending the letter to coincide with the briefing & interim decision meeting is a good idea. Another venue for this letter is the C-Link Task Force. It is important that the following issues (which are reflected in the letter) are shared with the Board:

- Features that will make the light rail experience nicer for riders, enhance Rainier Valley, and make Link more successful
- Concerns regarding utility relocations
- Cost trade-offs

Ron added that LRRP members have the opportunity to be “brokers” to help ST staff elevate urban design issues and address trade-offs with the Board, especially as they come to decisions on the Airport Link/Southeast Seattle segment: Another issue will be surface investments vs. Beacon Hill Station—where to spend the money. If LRRP members attend the ST Board meeting in person when the letter is presented (8/23), it will have much more of an impact.

Rick asked whether the letter is too long, and Ron replied, probably yes, that editing will help, but it's still important that you're there in person. Debora suggested mailing it the week of 8/13, with a summary of what's included in the packet – only recent recommendations. Ron added that the C-Link agenda offers more time and opportunity for interactive dialogue; not just the public comment period afforded at the Board meeting.

Panel members continued to discuss the letter, asking Cheryl to get it edited down to two pages with some bullets and organizing subtitles to make it easier to read. Really highlight the “ambassador” part of the letter; the Board needs to know that if the first section of Link is so utilitarian that it's unattractive, we won't get public support for funding other segments. We will have won the battle but lost the war.

The two possible dates for the LRRP retreat are September 21<sup>st</sup> and September 28<sup>th</sup>. Mimi said she will be gone from 9/17 – 10/2, so neither option works for her. September 21<sup>st</sup> was chosen, and Cheryl announced no LRRP meetings between now and then; August 15<sup>th</sup>, September 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> meetings are cancelled.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00.